Dr. *TILLOTSON's*

FAST-SERMON

BEFORE THE

House of COMMONS,

APRIL 28. 1690.

Jovis 17 *die April.* 1690.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this Houſe be given to Dr. *Tillotſon,* Dean of St. *Pauls,* for the Sermon Preached before this Houſe Yeſterday; And that he be deſired to Print the ſame; And that Sir *Edmund Jenings* do acquaint him therewith.

Paul Jodrell,
Cler. Dom. Com.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the Honourable

House of Commons,

ON

Wednesday the 16th of *April*:

A DAY Appointed by Their MAJESTIES,

FOR A

Solemn Monthly Fast.

By *JOHN TILLOTSON*, D. D. Dean of St. *Pauls*, and Clerk of the Closet to His Majesty.

LONDON:

Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the *Three Pigeons* in *Cornhill*; *William Rogers*, at the *Sun* over-against St. *Dunstan's* Church in *Fleetstreet*; And *John Tillotson*, Bookseller in *London*. MDCXC.

Eccleſiaſtes IX. 11.

I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong, nor yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

NEXT to the acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing is more eſſential to Religion, than the Belief of his Providence, and a conſtant dependence upon him, as the great Governour of the World, and the wiſe diſpoſer of all the affairs and concernments of the children of men: And nothing can be a greater argument of Providence, than that there is ſuch an order of Cauſes laid in Nature, that in ordinary courſe every thing does uſually attain its end; and yet that there is ſuch a mixture of Contingency, as that now and then we cannot tell how nor why, the moſt likely cauſes do deceive us, and fail of producing their uſual effects.

For if there be a God and a Providence, it is reaſonable that things ſhould be thus: Becauſe a Providence does ſuppoſe all things to have been at firſt wiſely fram'd, and with a fitneſs to attain their end; but yet it does alſo ſuppoſe that God hath reſerved to himſelf a power and liberty to interpoſe, and to croſs as he pleaſes, the uſual courſe of things; to awaken men to the conſideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to aſcribe thoſe things to his wiſe diſpoſal, which, if we never ſaw any change, we ſhould be apt to impute to blind neceſſity. And therefore the *Wiſe-man*, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence, tells us that thus he had obſerved things to be in this World; that though they generally happen according to the probability of Second Cauſes, yet ſometimes they fall out quite otherwiſe, *I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*, &c.

The connexion of which Words, with the foregoing Diſcourſe, is briefly this. Among many other Obſervations which the *Wiſe Preacher* makes in this *Sermon* of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this World, and of the miſtakes of men about them, he takes notice here in the *Text*, and in the *Verſe* before it, of two Extremes

tremes of human Life: Some, becauſe of the uncertainty of all worldly things, caſt off all care and diligence, and neglect the uſe of proper and probable means; having found by experience, that when men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are diſappointed they know not how: Others, on the contrary, rely ſo much upon their own skill and induſtry, as to promiſe ſucceſs to themſelves in all their undertakings; and preſume ſo much upon ſecond Cauſes, as if no conſideration at all were to be had of the Firſt.

The *Wiſe Preacher* reproves both theſe Extremes, and ſhews the folly and vanity of them. On the one hand, of thoſe who ſit ſtill, and will uſe no care and endeavour, becauſe it may all happen to be diſappointed, and to fail of Succeſs: Not conſidering, that though prudent care and diligence will not always do the buſineſs, yet there is nothing to be done without them, in the ordinary courſe of things; and that, in the order of Second Cauſes, theſe are the moſt likely and effectual means to any end: And therefore, rejecting this lazy Principle, he counſels men, whatever they propoſe to themſelves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the uſe of proper means for the attainment of it; in the *Verſe* immediately

ly before the *Text*, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

But then he obſerves alſo, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand; that they who manage their affairs with great wiſdom and induſtry, are apt to preſume and reckon upon the certain ſucceſs of them, without taking into conſideration that which in all human affairs is moſt conſiderable, the favour and bleſſing of that almighty and wiſe Providence which rules the World; *I returned*, ſays he, *and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*, &c.

I returned and ſaw, that is, having conſider'd on the one hand the folly of ſloth and careleſsneſs, I turned mine eyes the other way, and ſaw as great an errour on the other hand; in mens preſuming too much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the Providence of God. For I have found, ſays *Solomon*, by manifold obſervation, That the ſucceſs of things does not always anſwer the probability of ſecond cauſes and means. So that the ſum of the *Preacher's* advice is this: When thou propoundeſt any end to thy ſelf, be diligent and vigorous in the uſe of means; and when thou haſt done all, look above and beyond theſe to a Superiour

Superior Cauſe which over-rules, and ſteers, and ſtops as he pleaſes, all the motions and activity of ſecond Cauſes: And be not confident that all things are ever ſo wiſely and firmly laid, that they cannot fail of ſucceſs. For the Providence of God doth many times ſtep in, to divert the moſt probable event of things, and to turn it quite another way: And whenever he pleaſeth to do ſo, the moſt ſtrong and likely means do fall lame, or ſtumble, or by ſome accident or other come ſhort of their end.

I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that is, here below, in this inferior World.

That the race is not to the ſwift: This the *Chaldee Paraphraſt* does underſtand with relation to war-like affairs, *I beheld*, ſays he, *and ſaw, that they who are ſwift as eagles do not always eſcape in the day of battel.* But I chuſe rather to underſtand the Words in their more obvious ſenſe, that in a Race many things may happen to hinder him that is ſwifteſt from winning it.

Nor the battel to the ſtrong; That is, victory and ſucceſs in war do not always attend the greateſt force and preparations, nor doth that ſide which in humane eſtimation is ſtrongeſt, always prevail and get the better.

Nor yet bread to the wise; *Neque doctorum panem esse*, ſo ſome render the Words, that learned men are not always ſecured againſt poverty and want.

Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, for ſo ſome *Interpreters* tranſlate the Words, *Neque induſtriis divitias esse*, that thoſe who take moſt pains do not always get the greateſt eſtates.

Nor yet favour to men of skill; that is, to thoſe who underſtand men and buſineſs, and how to apply themſelves dextrouſly to the inclinations and intereſts of Princes and Great men. Others interpret theſe Words more generally, *Neque peritorum artificum esse gratiam*, that thoſe who excell moſt in their ſeveral Arts and Profeſſions do not always meet with ſuitable encouragement: But becauſe the Word, which is here render'd *favour*, is ſo frequently us'd by *Solomon* for the favour of Princes, the former ſenſe ſeems to be more eaſie and natural.

But time and chance happeneth to them all; that is, ſaith *Aben Ezra*, there is a ſecret Providence of God which ſometimes preſents men with unexpected opportunities, and interpoſeth accidents which no human wiſdom could foreſee: Which gives ſucceſs to very unlikely means, and defeats the ſwift, and the ſtrong, and the learned, and the induſtrious, and them that are beſt vers'd

in men and buſineſs, of their ſeveral ends and deſigns.

It ſometimes falls out, that he that is *ſwifteſt*, by a fall, or by fainting, or by ſome other unlucky accident may loſe the Race.

It ſometimes happens, that a much ſmaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a paſs; by a ſtratagem, or by a ſudden ſurpriſe, or by ſome other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force.

And that an unlearned man, in compariſon, by favour, or friends, or by ſome happy chance of ſetting out to the beſt advantage the little learning he has, before one that hath leſs, may arrive at great things; when perhaps at the ſame time, the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to ſtarve.

And that men of no great parts and induſtry may ſtumble into an eſtate, and by ſome caſual hit in Trade, may attain ſuch a Fortune, as the man that hath toil'd and drudg'd all his life ſhall never be able to reach.

And *Laſtly*, that a man of no great ambition or deſign may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, ſome ſoft and lucky ſeaſon of addreſs, may ſlide into his Princes favour, and all on the ſudden be hoiſted up to that

degree of dignity of eſteem, as the deſigning Man who hath been laying trains to blow up his Rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to worm others out and to skrew himſelf in, ſhall never be able to attain.

The Words thus explain'd contain this general Propoſition, which ſhall be the ſubject of my following Diſcourſe.

That in human affairs the moſt likely means do not always attain their end, nor does the event conſtantly anſwer the probability of ſecond cauſes; but there is a ſecret Providence which governs and over-rules all things, and does, when it pleaſes, interpoſe to defeat the moſt hopeful and probable deſigns.

In the handling of this Propoſition I ſhall do theſe three things.

Firſt, I ſhall confirm and illuſtrate the truth of of it, by an Induction of the particulars which are inſtanced in, here in the *Text*.

Secondly, I ſhall give ſome reaſon and account of this, why the Providence of God doth ſometimes interpoſe to hinder and defeat the moſt probable deſigns.

Thirdly, I ſhall draw ſome inferences from the whole, ſuitable to the occaſion of this Day. In all which I ſhall endeavour to be as brief as conveniently I can.

Firſt, For

Firſt, For the confirmation and illuſtration of this Propoſition, *That the moſt likely means do not always attain their end; but there is a ſecret Providence which over-rules and governs all events, and does, when it pleaſes, interpoſe to defeat the moſt probable and hopeful deſigns.* This is the general Concluſion which *Solomon* proves by this Induction of particulars in the *Text*. And he inſtanceth in the moſt probable means for the compaſſing of the ſeveral ends which moſt men in this World propoſe to themſelves. And the great darlings of mankind are *Victory*, *Riches*, and *Honour*: I do not mention *Pleaſure*, becauſe that ſeems rather to reſult from the uſe and enjoyment of the other. Now if a man deſign *Victory*, what more probable means to overcome in a Race than ſwiftneſs? What more likely to prevail in War than ſtrength? If a man aim at Riches, what more proper to raiſe an Eſtate than underſtanding and induſtry? If a man aſpire to Honour, what more likely to prefer him to the Kings favour and ſervice than dexterity and skill in buſineſs? And yet experience ſhews that theſe means, as probable as they ſeem to be, are not always ſucceſsful for the accompliſhment of their ſeveral ends.

Or elſe we may ſuppoſe that *Solomon* by theſe Inſtances did intend to repreſent the chief engines and

and inſtruments of humane deſigns and actions. Now there are *five* things more eſpecially, which do eminently qualify a man for any undertaking; expedition and quickneſs of diſpatch; ſtrength and force; providence and forecaſt; diligence and induſtry; knowledge, and inſight into men and buſineſs: And ſome think that *Solomon* did intend to repreſent theſe ſeveral qualities by the ſeveral inſtances in the *Text*. *The Race is not to the ſwift*, that is, men of the greateſt expedition and diſpatch do not always ſucceed: For we ſee that men do ſometimes out-run buſineſs, and make haſte to be undone. *Nor the battel to the ſtrong*, that is, neither does force and ſtrength always carry it. *Nor yet bread to the wiſe*; which ſome underſtand of the provident care and pains of the Husband man, whoſe harveſt is not always anſwerable to his labour and hopes. *Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding*, or induſtry; that is, neither is diligence in buſineſs always crown'd with ſucceſs. *Nor yet favour to men of skill*, that is, neither have they that have the greateſt dexterity in the management of affairs always the fortune to riſe. And if we take the words in this ſence, the thing will come much to one: But I rather approve the firſt interpretation, as being leſs forc'd and nearer to the *Letter*.

So

So that the force of *Solomon*'s reaſoning is this. If the ſwifteſt do not always win the race; nor the ſtrongeſt always overcome in War: If knowledg and learning do not always ſecure men from want; nor induſtry always make men rich; nor political skill always raiſe men to high place; nor any other means, that can be inſtanced in as moſt probable, do conſtantly and infallibly ſucceed: then it muſt be acknowledg'd that there is ſome other Cauſe which mingles it ſelf with humane affairs and governs all events; and which can, and does when it pleaſes, defeat the moſt likely, and bring to paſs the moſt improbable deſigns: And what elſe can that be imagin'd to be, but the ſecret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God; when we can find no other, we are very unreaſonable if we will not admit this to be the Cauſe of ſuch extraordinary events, but will obſtinately impute that to blind Neceſſity or Chance which hath ſuch plain characters upon it of a Divine Power and Wiſdom.

I might be large upon every one of theſe Inſtances in the *Text*, and illuſtrate them by pat and lively Examples both out of Scripture and other Hiſtories. But I ſhall briefly paſs over all of them, but the *ſecond*; *the battel is not to the ſtrong*.

The

The race is not to the ſwift. If we underſtand this literally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a Race, which may ſnatch Victory from the ſwifteſt runner. If we underſtand it, as the *Chaldee Paraphraſe* does, with relation to War, that the ſwifteſt does not always overcome or eſcape in the day of Battel; of this *Aſahel* is an eminent Inſtance, who though he was, as the Scripture tells us, *light of foot as a wild Roe*, yet did he not eſcape the ſpear of *Abner*. It ſeems that among the *Ancients*, ſwiftneſs was look'd upon as a great qualification in a Warriour, both becauſe it ſerves for a ſudden aſſault and onſet, and likewiſe for that which in civility we call a nimble retreat. And therefore *David*; in his Poetical *Lamentation* over thoſe two great Captains, *Saul* and *Jonathan*, takes particular notice of this warlike quality of theirs; *They were*, ſays he, *ſwifter than Eagles, ſtronger than Lyons:* And the conſtant Character which *Homer* gives of *Achilles*, one of his principal *Hero's*, is, that *he was ſwift of foot*: The *Poet* feigns of him, that by ſome charm or gift of the Gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his body except his heel: And *that* was the part to which he truſted; and in *that* he received his mortal wound: The wiſe Poet hereby inſtructing us, that many times

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our greateſt danger lies there, where we place our chief confidence and ſafety.

Nor yet bread to the wiſe, or to the learned. The poverty of *Poets* is Proverbial; and there are frequent inſtances in Hiſtory of eminently learned perſons that have been reduced to great ſtraits and neceſſities.

Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding: By which, whether we underſtand men of great parts, or of great diligence and induſtry; it is obvious to every mans obſervation, that an ordinary capacity and underſtanding does uſually lie more level to the buſineſs of a common Trade and Profeſſion, than more refin'd and elevated parts; which lie rather for ſpeculation than practice, and are better fitted for the pleaſure and ornament of converſation, than for the toil and drudgery of buſineſs: As a fine Razor is admirable for cutting hairs, but the dull Hatchet much more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of timber. And even when Parts and Induſtry meet together, they are many times leſs ſucceſsful in the raiſing of a great Eſtate, than men of much lower and ſlower underſtandings: becauſe theſe are apt to admire riches, which is a great ſpur to induſtry;

and becauſe they are perpetually intent upon one thing, and mind but one buſineſs, from which their thoughts never ſtraggle into vain and uſeleſs enquiries after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs; all which being foreign to their buſineſs they leave to thoſe who are, as they are wont to ſay of them in ſcorn, more curious and too wiſe to be rich.

Nor yet favour to men of skill. All Hiſtory is full of Inſtances of the caſual advancement of men to great favour and honour, when others, who have made it their ſerious ſtudy and buſineſs, have fallen ſhort of it. I could give a famous Example in this kind, of the manifold and manifeſt diſappointment of a whole *Order* of men: the ſlyeſt and moſt ſubtile, *in their generation, of all the children of this World*; the moſt politically inſtituted, and the beſt ſtudyed and skill'd in the tempers and intereſts of men; the moſt pragmatical, and cunning to inſinuate themſelves into the Intrigues of Courts and great Families: and who, by long experience, and an univerſal intelligence, and communicated obſervations, have reduced humane affairs, at leaſt, as they think, to a certain Art and Method, and to the moſt ſteddy Rules that ſuch

ſuch contingent things are capable of: I believe you all gueſs before-hand whom I mean, even the *honeſt Jeſuits*: And yet theſe men of ſo much art and skill have met with as many checks and diſappointments, as any ſort of men ever did: They have been diſcountenanc'd by almoſt all Princes and States, and, one time or other, baniſh'd out of moſt of the Courts and Countreys of *Europe*. And it is no ſmall argument of the Divine Providence, that ſo much cunning hath met with ſo little countenance and ſucceſs; and hath been ſo often, ſo groſly infatuated, and their *counſels turn'd into fooliſhneſs*.

But I promis'd only to mention theſe, and to inſiſt upon the ſecond Inſtance in the *Text*, *I return'd, and ſaw under the Sun, that the battel is not to the ſtrong*, to the *Gibborim*, the *Gyants*, for ſo the *Hebrew* word ſignifies; in which *Solomon* might poſſibly have reſpect to the hiſtory of the *Iſraelites* ſubduing the *Canaanites*, a People of great ſtrength and ſtature, among whom were the *Gyants*, *the ſons of Anak*: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his Father *David* with the great *Goliah*. But however that be, the *Scripture* is full of Examples to this pur-

poſe; that when the Providence of God is pleaſed to interpoſe in favour of any ſide, it becomes victorious; according to the ſaying of King
2 Chr. 14. 11. *Aſa* in his prayer to God, *it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with thoſe that have no power.*

Sometimes God hath defeated great Armies by plain and apparent Miracles: Such was the drowning of *Pharaoh* and his Hoſt in the *Red Sea*; and the *Stars* fighting in their courſes againſt *Siſera*; by which Poetical expreſſion I ſuppoſe is meant *Siſera's* being remarkably defeated by a viſible hand from Heaven: And ſuch was the deſtruction of the proud King of *Aſſyria's* Army by an *Angel*, who ſlew an hundred and fourſcoure and five thouſand of them in one night.

Sometimes God does this by more humane ways; by ſtriking mighty Armies with a *Panick* and unaccountable fear; and ſometimes by putting extraordinary ſpirits and courage into the weaker ſide, ſo that *an hundred ſhall chaſe a thouſand, and a thouſand ſhall put ten thouſand to flight.*

This

This made *David* ſo frequently to acknowledg the Providence of God, eſpecially in the affairs of War. *There is no King ſaved by the multitude of an Hoſt, neither is a mighty man delivered by much ſtrength.* Pſal. 33. 16. And again, *I will not truſt in my bowe, neither ſhall my ſword ſave me.* Pſal. 44. 6. And *Solomon* confirms the ſame obſervation, *There is no wiſdom,* ſays he, *nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord. The horſe is prepared againſt the day of battel, but ſafety,* or, as ſome *Tranſlations* render it *Victory, is of the Lord.* Prov. 21. 30, 31. *Gideon,* by a very odd ſtratagem of *Lamps* and *Pitchers,* defeated a very numerous Army, only with three hundred men. *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer,* by climbing up a Rock, and coming ſuddenly on the back of the *Philiſtines* Camp, ſtruck them with ſuch a terror as put their whole Army to flight. King *Aſa,* with a much ſmaller number, defeated that huge *Ethiopian* Army which conſiſted of a *Million.* And how was *Xerxes* his mighty Army overthrown, almoſt by a handful of *Grecians*? And, to come nearer our ſelves, how was that formidable Fleet of the *Spaniards,* which they preſumptuouſly called *invincible,* ſhatter'd and broken in pieces, chiefly by the Winds and the Sea? So many accidents

are

are there, especially in War, whereby the Divine Providence doth sometimes interpose and give Victory to the weaker side.

And this hath been so apparent in all Ages, that even the *Heathen* did always acknowledge, in the affairs of War, a special interposition of *Fortune*; by which the wiser among them did understand the *Divine Providence*. *Plutarch*, speaking of the *Romans*, says, that *Time* and *Fortune*, the very same with *Solomon's Time* and *Chance* here in the *Text*, *did lay the foundation of their Greatness*; by which he ascribes their success to a remarkable Providence of God concurring with several happy Opportunities.

And *Livy*, their great Historian, hath this remarkable Observation, That *in all human affairs, especially in matters of War, Fortune hath a mighty stroke.* And again, *No where*, says he, *is the event less answerable to expectation than in War; and therefore nothing is so slight and inconsiderable, which may not turn the Scales in a great matter.* And *Cæsar* himself, who was perhaps the most skilful and prosperous Warriour that ever was, makes the same acknowledgment; *As in all other things*, says he, *so particularly in War, Fortune hath a huge sway.* And *Plutarch* observes, That there

there was no *Temple* at *Rome* dedicated to *Wiſdom* or *Valour*, but a moſt magnificent and ſtately one to *Fortune*; ſignifying hereby, that they did aſcribe their ſucceſs infinitely more to the Providence of God, than to their own Courage and Conduct. I proceed now, in the

Second place, to give ſome reaſon and account of this, Why the Providence of God doth ſometimes thus interpoſe to hinder and defeat the moſt probable deſigns of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of his Providence, and of their dependence upon Him, and ſubordination to Him; and that He is the great Governour of the World, and *rules in the Kingdoms of men*; and that *all the inhabitants of the Earth are as nothing to Him*, and the power of Second Cauſes inconſiderable: That *He doth according to his will, in the Armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him what doſt thou.* II.

God hath ſo order'd things, in the adminiſtration of the affairs of the World, as to encourage the uſe of means; and yet ſo, as to keep men in a continual dependence upon him

for the efficacy and ſucceſs of them: To encourage Induſtry and Prudence, God generally permits things to their natural courſe, and to fall out according to the power and probability of ſecond Cauſes.

But then, leſt men ſhould caſt off Religion, and *deny the God that is above;* leſt they ſhould *truſt in their ſword and their bowe, and ſay, the Lord hath not done this*; leſt men ſhould look upon themſelves as the Creators and framers of their own fortune, and when they do but a little outſtrip others in wiſdom or power, in the skill and conduct of humane affairs, they ſhould grow proud and preſumptuous, God is pleaſed ſometimes more remarkably to interpoſe, *to hide pride from man*, as the expreſſion is in *Job*; to check the haughtineſs and inſolence of mens ſpirits, and to keep them within the bounds of modeſty and humility; to make us to know *that we are but men*, and that the reins of the World are not in our hands, but that there is *One* above who ſways and governs all things here below.

And

And indeed if we ſhould ſuppoſe, in the firſt frame of things which we call *Nature*, an immutable Order to be fix'd, and all things to go on in a conſtant courſe, according to the power and force of ſecond Cauſes, without any interpoſition of Providence to ſtop, or alter that courſe, upon any occaſion: In this caſe, the foundation of a great part of Religion, but eſpecially of Prayer to God would be quite taken away: Upon this Suppoſition, it would be the vaineſt thing in the World to pray to God for the good ſucceſs of our undertakings, or to acknowledge Him as the Author of it: For if God do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a ſettled and eſtabliſh'd courſe; then inſtead of praying to God we ought to ply the means, and to make the beſt proviſion and preparation we can for the effecting of what we deſire; and to rely upon that, without taking God at all into our counſel and conſideration. For all application to God by Prayer doth evidently ſuppoſe, that the Providence of God does frequently interpoſe, to over-rule events beſides and beyond the natural and ordinary courſe of things, and to ſteer them to a quite different Point, from that to

which in human probability they ſeem'd to tend.

So that it is every whit as neceſſary to Religion to believe the Providence of God, and that He governs the World, and does when He pleaſes, interpoſe in the affairs of it, as that He made it at firſt. I come now in the

III. *Third* and laſt place, to make ſome Inferences, ſuitable to the Occaſion of this Day, from what hath been ſaid upon this Argument: And they ſhall be theſe.

Firſt, From hence we may learn, not to account Religion, and time ſpent in the Service of God, and in Prayer to Him for his bleſſing upon our endeavours, to be any hindrance to our affairs. For after we have done all we can, the event is ſtill in Gods hand, and reſts upon the diſpoſal of his Providence.

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of Prayer, and behave themſelves ſo careleſly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we ſee too many do; they would not look upon every hour that is ſpent in Devotion as loſt from their buſineſs.

If

If men would but take a view of what happen'd to them in the courſe of a long Life, I believe moſt of us would ſee reaſon to acknowledge, that our proſperity and ſucceſs in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities, upon undeſign'd and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecaſt and conduct.

And if this were well conſider'd by us, we ſhould not methinks be ſo apt to leave God out of our counſels and undertakings, as if he were a meer Name and Cypher in the World. It is, I am ſure, the advice of one that was much wiſer and more experienc'd, than any of us will pretend to be, I mean, *Solomon*, *Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart, and leane not to thine own underſtanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy paths: Be not wiſe in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil.* There is no Principle that ought more firmly to be believed by us than this, That to live under a conſtant ſenſe and awe of Almighty God, to depend upon his Providence, and to ſeek his favour and bleſſing upon all our deſigns, being fearful to offend Him and careful to pleaſe Him, is a much nearer and ſurer way to ſuc- Prov. 3. 5, 6.

ceſs, than our own beſt Prudence and Preparations.

And therefore at ſuch a time, more eſpecially, when we are going to War, or engaged in it, we ſhould break off our ſins by repentance and the ſincere reſolution of a better courſe: We ſhould earneſtly implore the bleſſing of God upon our undertakings; and not only take great care that our Cauſe be juſt, but likewiſe that there be *no wicked thing* amongſt us, to drive God out of our Camp; *no accurſed* thing, that may provoke Him to deliver us into the hands of our Enemies. It was a particular Law given by God to the *Jews*, *When the Hoſt goeth forth againſt thine Enemy, then keep thy ſelf from every wicked thing*; *then*, that is, more eſpecially at ſuch a time.

Deut. 23. 9.

And this is a neceſſary Caution, not only to thoſe who are perſonally engaged in the War, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the day of Battel, or if God ſhall ſuffer them to fall by the hand of the Enemy, that having made their peace before hand with Him, they may not only have the comfort of a good Cauſe, but of a good Conſcience, void of offence towards God and men.

But

But this Caution likewiſe concerns thoſe, who are intereſted in the ſucceſs and event of the War; as we all are, not only in regard of our Lives and Eſtates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us, our Religion and the freedom of our Conſciences; which are now every whit as much at ſtake, as our Civil intereſts and Liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of theſe, we ſhould be very careful *to keep our ſelves from every wicked thing*; that they who fight for us may not for our ſins, and for our ſakes, turn their backs in the day of battel, and fall by the Sword of the Enemy.

Secondly, From hence we may likewiſe learn, ſo to uſe the means as ſtill to depend upon God; who can, as he pleaſes, bleſs the Counſels and endeavours of Men, or blaſt them and make them of none effect. For as God hath promiſed nothing but to a wiſe and diligent uſe of means, ſo all our prudence, and induſtry, and moſt careful preparations may miſcarry, if He do not favour our deſign: For without Him nothing is wiſe, nothing is ſtrong, nothing is able to reach and attain its end.

We

We ſhould indeed uſe the means as vigorouſly, as if God did nothing; and when we have done ſo, we ſhould depend upon God for the ſucceſs of thoſe means, as if we our ſelves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and bleſſing: For when all is done, we are only ſafe under his Protection, and ſure of ſucceſs from his Bleſſing.

For whatever vain and *fooliſh* men may *ſay in their hearts, There is, There is a* God, that made the World, and adminiſters the affairs of it with great Wiſdom and Goodneſs; elſe how came any of us into Being, or what do we here? Did we not moſt aſſuredly believe that there is a God, that governs the World and ſuper-intends humane affairs; the firſt wiſh of a Wiſe man would be, to ſteal out of Being, if he could; and that the ſame Chance or Neceſſity, that brought him into the World, would take the firſt opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to preſent, and great, and certain Evils; and to have no ſecurity againſt the continuance of them, or the return of the ſame or worſe Evils; nor to have any aſſurance of a better and more durable ſtate of reſt and happineſs hereafter, is in truth ſo very melancholy

melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any conſideration in the World that is of force and power enough to ſupport the mind of man under it: And were there not in the World a *Being*, that is wiſer, and better, and more powerful than our ſelves, and that keeps things from running into endleſs confuſion and diſorder; a *Being* that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly conſider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we ſuffer upon his account, I do not ſee what reaſon any man could have to take any comfort and joy in Being, or to wiſh the continuance of it for one moment.

Thirdly and laſtly, The Conſideration of what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, ſhould keep us from being too ſanguine and confident of the moſt likely deſigns and undertakings; becauſe theſe do not alwayes anſwer the probability of ſecond Cauſes and Means; and never leſs, than when we do with the greateſt confidence rely upon them; when we promiſe moſt to our ſelves from them, then are they moſt likely to deceive us: They are, as the *Prophet* compares them, like *a broken reed*, which a man may

may walk with in his hand, whilſt he layes no great ſtreſs upon it; but if he truſt to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it will not only fail him, but even *pierce him through.*

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our affairs, when they are in the moſt hopeful and likely condition to ſucceed and do well, than to ſhut God and his Providence out of our counſels and conſideration. When we paſs God by, and take no notice of Him, but will rely upon our own wiſdom and ſtrength, we provoke him to leave us *in the hands of our own counſel,* and to let us ſee what weak and fooliſh Creatures we are: And a man is never in greater danger of drowning, than when he claſps his arms cloſeſt about himſelf: Beſides, that God loves to reſiſt the ſelf-confident and preſumptuous, and *to ſcatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

And as in all our concernments we ought to have a great regard to God, the Supreme diſpoſer of all things, and earneſtly to ſeek his favour and bleſſing upon all our undertakings, ſo more eſpecially in the affairs of War; in which the Providence of God is pleas'd many times in a very peculiar manner to interpoſe and

and intereſt it ſelf: And there is great reaſon to think he does ſo; becauſe all War is, as it were, an Appeal to God, and a reference of thoſe Cauſes to the deciſion of his Providence, which through the pride, and injuſtice, and perverſe paſſions of men, can receive no other determination.

And here God loves to ſhew himſelf, and in an eminent manner to take part with Right and Juſtice againſt thoſe *mighty Oppreſſours* of *the Earth*, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: In this caſe, the Providence of God is ſometimes pleas'd to give a remarkable check to great Power and Violence, and to *One* that vainly gives out himſelf *not unequal to the whole World*, by very weak and contemptible means; and, as *the Apoſtle* elegantly expreſſeth it, *by the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are*: And to ſay to *Him*, as God once did to the proud King of *Aſſyria*: *Whom haſt thou reproached and blaſphemed, and againſt whom haſt thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even againſt the Holy one of* Iſrael. *Haſt thou not heard long ago, that I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to paſs, that thou ſhouldeſt be* Iſa. 37. 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32.

to lay waſt defenced Cities into ruinous heaps: Therefore their Inhabitants were of ſmall power, they were diſmayed and confounded, &c. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage againſt me: Becauſe thy rage againſt me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook into thy noſe, and my bridle into thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou cameſt. -----The zeal of the Lord of Hoſts ſhall do this.

But more eſpecially, in vindication of his oppreſſed Truth and Religion, and in the great and ſignal Deliverances of his Church and People, God is wont to take the conduct of affairs into his own hands, and not to proceed by humane rules and meaſures: He then bids ſecond Cauſes to ſtand by, that *his own Arm may be ſeen*, and *his Salvation may appear*: He raiſeth the ſpirits of men above their natural pitch, *and giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaſeth ſtrength*, as the *Prophet* expreſſeth it.

Thus hath the Providence of God very viſibly appear'd in our late Deliverance; in ſuch a manner, as I know not whether He ever did for any other Nation, except the People of *Iſrael*, when He delivered them *from the Houſe of Bondage by ſo mighty a hand and ſo outſtretched an arm*: And

And yet too many among us, I ſpeak it this day to our ſhame, do not ſeem to have the leaſt ſenſe of this great Deliverance, or of the hand of God which was ſo viſible in it; but like the Children of *Iſrael* when they were brought out of *Egypt*, we are full of *murmurings* and diſcontent againſt God the Author, and his Servant the happy Inſtrument under God of this our Deliverance. What the *Prophet* ſayes of *that* People, may I fear be too juſtly apply'd to us, *Let favour be ſhewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteouſneſs; in the Land of uprightneſs he will deal unjuſtly, and will not behold the Majeſty of the Lord: Lord, When thy hand is lifted up, they will not ſee; but they ſhall ſee, and be aſhamed*: And I hope I may add that which follows in the next *verſe*, *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou alſo haſt wrought all our works for us.* What God hath already done for our deliverance is, I hope, an earneſt that He will carry it on to a perfect peace and ſettlement; and this, notwithſtanding our high provocations and horrible ingratitude to *the God of our Life*, and *of our Salvation.* Iſa. 26. 10, 11.

And when ever the Providence of God thinks fit thus to interpoſe in humane affairs, *the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*:

For which reaſon *their Majeſties*, in their great Piety and Wiſdom, and from a juſt ſenſe of the Providence of Almighty God, which *rules in the Kingdoms of men*, have thought fit to ſet apart this *Day* for ſolemn repentance and humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and ſtill are guilty of, and which are of all other our greateſt and moſt dangerous Enemies, may not *ſeparate between God and us*, and *hinder good things from us*, and cover us with confuſion in the day of our danger and diſtreſs: And likewiſe, earneſtly to implore the favour and bleſſing of Almighty God upon *their Majeſties* Forces and Preparations by Sea an Land: And more particularly, for the preſervation of *his Majeſties* ſacred Perſon, upon whom ſo much depends, and who is contented again to hazard Himſelf to ſave us.

To conclude; There is no ſuch way to engage the Providence of God for us, as by real Repentance and Reformation; and by doing all we can, in our ſeveral Places from the higheſt to the loweſt, by the proviſion of wiſe and effectual Laws for the diſcountenancing and ſuppreſſing

ſuppreſſing of Profaneneſs and Vice, and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the more kindly and powerful influence of a good Example, to retrieve the ancient Piety and Virtue of the Nation: For without this, what ever we may think of the firmneſs of our preſent ſettlement, we cannot long be upon good terms with Almighty God, upon whoſe favour depends the proſperity and ſtability of the preſent and future Times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and that is, to ſtir up your charity towards the poor; which is likewiſe a great part of the Duty of this Day, and which ought alwayes to accompany our Prayers and Faſtings: *Thy Prayers and thine Almes*, ſaith the *Angel* to *Cornelius*, are *come up before God*: And therefore if we deſire that our Prayers ſhould reach Heaven, and receive a gracious anſwer from God, we muſt ſend up our Almes along with them.

And inſtead of all other arguments to this purpoſe, I ſhall only recite to you the plain and perſuaſive words of God Himſelf, in which He declares what kind of Faſt is acceptable to Him: *Is it ſuch a Faſt as I have choſen. a Day for a man to afflict his ſoul? Is it to bow down his head* Iſai. 58. 5, 6, &c.

as

as a bullruſh, to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a Faſt, and an acceptable Day to the Lord? Is not this the Faſt that I have choſen? To looſe the bands of wickedneſs, and to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke: Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thine houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh. Then ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily; thy righteouſnes, or thine *Alms, ſhall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord ſhall be thy rere-ward: Then ſhalt thou call, and I will anſwer thee; thou ſhalt cry, and He ſhall ſay, here I am.*

Now to *Him that ſitteth upon the Throne,* and to *the Lamb that was ſlain:* To *God, even our Father,* and to *our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the firſt begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth: Unto Him, who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Prieſts unto God and his Father: To Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever,* Amen.

And

And the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight; through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

FINIS

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